4/23/70

Dear Harold,

I received 3 letters from you today, dated over 4/16 to 22.

You admit your failure to recognize the limits of a 16 year-old, at least the feeling that you have pleed too much of a burden on it. My initial ~~response~~ reaction was that you do not appreciate the emotional make-up of a 16 yr-old, at least not this 16-yr. old. I do upset easily, and was prompted--with the various letters--to become very upset. Maybe you will not understand this, but my hurt was for hurting you in ways of which I was not aware. I feel not like a dog who has been smacked for innocently going on the rug; I feel like a little boy who accedentally shot his sister with a gun. This may be hard for you to appreciate. Believe me--it is harder for me to say knowing that it in no way makes up for whatever I did.

I take into account the fact that you are up to your ears in enemies and in those who threaten to ruin what you have done and are doing. That is not to say that you feel any less than what is reflected in your letters (you say you don't). It is to say that the way I am going you will have to cut off relations with me because of the danger I present. While I do understand why you would have to take such action, as one who has never in any way intended you or your work wrong, it comes as a severe blow and is hard to take.

Let me get off of this sob-stuff. It is all true and all subdued. I mention it because of the high regard I have for you and our friendship. This does not heal the wounds, however, and there is without doubt a conflict between "business and pleasure". I'll get down to specifics, perhaps in the hopes that I can clear up whatever doubts you have. Have me clarify that which I do not adequately cover now. I am not myself but want to get this off while it is fresh in my mind.

NICHOLS: Here I begin with your 4/21 and respond pretty much as I go through it.

I do not know what you refer to with"Connally picture." I imagine this is the X-rays or the wrist fragments. One of my slides from A included wrist fragments. I was promised those in 2-3 weeks and am waiting 7.

My 399 base picture with the 3 other bases was taken in Sept, 1968 for the letter with which it was delivered is 9/11/68.

I tried intentionally and quite hard to stay 100% off of you and your materials as you indicated. There were times when I was prompted. I did not relate this to the slits. When I brought this up, it was to do as you also indicated--treat him as an expert. I do admit being wrong (some good that does). It was the time, and I did this quite unknowingly.

You mention that I refer to his taking of his own picture when duplicating others' work as exhonerating him. It does not and I know enough to be aware of that. My memo was objective and I merely omitted value judgments in my haste to get everything down.

The latter part of last graph first page of 4/21 indicates undue worry on your part. I was a "good boy" with the base knowing full well that this is yours and of his actions on this. I never in any way in any form at any time mentioned the prospect of alteration to him. And he could have been leading me. He did mention without prompting that he did not know what to make of the configuration of the 399 base. He pointed to the crater in his picture and said he guessed my fragment fell from there in photographing. I did not tell him that this is where Frazier removed metal and made no mention of that at all. His idea with the base, at least what he told me, is shit for the birds. His mm scale is black with white letters. It is appaerntly cut from something larger for I recall it having irregular edges and it includes only a cm. You have pix of it on his cartridge case pix which dupli ate Dick's work. Do not "Jesus Christ" over my expressed esire to have brought my pix for comparison. I didn't in the first place. Secondly, I could have compare without saying what I was comparing. I wouldn't have and never did for I knew not to. Be 100% assured that I did no blabbing here. I never mentioned your name or any of your relations to this.

You have not specifically indiacted to me the obvious reasons for alteration. One is what you point in a later letter, the pressure by you plus Garrison suit and the size of JBC fragments. Another I hold is damage to base.

Nichols told me that Bell was key. His reasoning seemed non sequitor but I could not grasp all of the details.

My eyes are opened on his visit to the copyright office.

Your 5th parag last page of 4/21 was one of those which cut deep. We all have paranoia to fear and I fear the consequences. That I was contributory is hard to bear.

I think you are very right in your next graph but that is just dandy at this point--like the operation being a success and the patient dying.

Dick wrote Nichols about my info on fragment falling from 399 base. Nichols wrote measking for the Archives letter and permission for use in suit, both of which I gave with, I believe, Dick's consent. I then told him I had questions he could or might be able to answer. These concerned solely my old and invalid ideas on head shot and resulted in some of my most fruitless correspondances which I merely discontinued. John then contacted me some months later saying he accidentally destroyed his copy of A letter and asked for another. Then, I wrote him at your suggestion to make it clear the limited use I was allowing of that material and he acknolwedged and promised to abide. He just recently sent me the letter asking to meet with me. My knowledge when we first corresponded was critically deficient so I could not have transmitted anything damaging to you.

The following graph is a logical one and a fair one--one which I would not construe as infringing on my rights where others might. You are right. As long as I am in your confidence and have been given information by you which is to be kept strictly confidential, then I must not contact or respond to your enemies which undoubtedly jeopardized you, your efforts, and our relationship.

As for reviewing my meeting with Nichols ofr things I may now regard in a new light, I can think of nothing more than what I reported originally in the memo. One other thing which I wrote down right after mailing out my memo was that he said he had gotten such detailed info from old JFK doctors that the X-rays could not possibly be forged--he would know right away. Here he mentioned you saying that you and others had considered the possibility of forged X-rays. Also, it may be significant the way he put this to me. Recall what I wrote you about the Humes DJ report and "major portions" of a missile re Nichols' understanding of this. After asking me if I was familiar with this report, he said, "WEll, they saw the X-rays then and they still didn't see the metal fragments, right?" Perhaps he was pumping me to see if I had read the PM's which he apparently had just done. Of course, as I indicated, I told him that he was right, and just nodded in agreement.

In response to your Nichols comments in your 4/22, you begin by asking if and why he misunderstood the language in PM III. It seems likely to me that he couldn't have done an in depth reading at the office in a day. Even so, it is possible, as I said, that he was probing me.

The only specific reference to you came over WW I. He was saying that his original belief was front entrance, and somehow I interjected that Humes originally reported the wound as puncture but that it was changed from the holograph. I said that this has been out since WW. He said something to the effect that you've done so much work but he wishes you'd change your style of writing.

I did not learn from Nichols that the autopsy room was cleared. I admit missing it in PM and picked it up from S#O when I was hopped up about the "pre-autopsy" exam. It does not concern me really. John just said it "should" have been cleared.

"If you have any further intercourse with him about medical things, there will be no more between you and me": This cut deep. But, having written this twixt and tween other things, I've had many hours to think. You are right, and I am in agreement.

I've thought long about this. You have taken me in confidence on many things in many very important areas, areas which have the distinct promise of bearing fruit, which have had the effect of channeling my efforts largely to more fruitful aspects, which have broadened my knowledge of the fact. Yet, in a manner not unlike the country lad who makes his first journey to the city and is dazzled by sparkling trinkets so that he throws his life savings away on junk, I turn attention to Lifton, who has to offer me troubles and a bunch of pictures which probably would give me nothing more than a fatter file, and Nichols, who has forensic experience drowned in his inutterable ego and ignorance. ("Loony" for Lifton was not intended to completely describe him--rather to say that he is not worth bothering with).

As you well know, my ego often needs deflating. I have been a fool, and that, in retrospect, is my own evaluation no comments invited. I am, quite plainly, fed up with all this crap. And this does not mean that I am sick of keeping confidences. It means that I am fed up with myself for having placed myself in a position

where I am constantly on guard with assorted confidences, where I am likewise vulnerable to breaking them and thus hurting others, and where I am under such pressure. When I assess the situation, it is more than obvious what I must do. I have decided to break off completely from Nichols and Lifton. That is all. I don't want to be a part of this dangerous foolishness, childsplay, mania. I do believe that I have a priceless relationship with you in so many ways and it is just not worth it.

If you have any suggestions on breaking off, make them. Prior to receiving your letter, I had written one to Nichols asking him to explain why he felt the lung was penetrated--that is all. I suspect that his response will warrent nothing further so that should be a simple matter to end. Lifton too, I suspect. And, by all means, let me say it for you: You told me so.

There is no more explaining I can do--and no more appologizing. I think you know my sentiments, as helpless as they may be. I have learned my lesson, although it was a hard one. It is done--all I can do is add it to my "should have" list and know not to make the same mistakes, not to contact people for the sake of contacting people, for getting, as Dick so aptly puts it, "asshole droppings."

But, again, I am sorry and deeply hurt because I am aware of the hurt I have inadvertantly caused you--this time more than ever. I know how troubled you are now, how many messes you have been sweeping up and how you have no need of any more. You can imagine what an aide you've been to my work and to me. Even for the selfish motive (which is now furthest from my mind) I cannot risk causing you any more grief. So, have my assurance, my word of honor as I have rarely given it, that none of this will happen again. And if you ever sense it, do as you have done in the past--except even stronger.

rest of 4/22: I reply somewhat in haste. On Archives, you should know that I did not intentionally "trespass" into your work. The memo of transfer was asked for on a misunderstanding. As I told you before, it was after I had asked for it that I learned of your efforts with it. Of course, I'm dropping it. I'll take yuor advise on the Humes memo. I also explained that I asked for the certification of missing documents from CE 397 so not to get caught with my pants down as I did with Specter. I might as well drop this too.

On the Nichols base photo, I assume you want me to demand this. Before I write though, how do I let them know that I have seen the real thing? Do I say that it was personally shown to me by John? Should I enclose a sketch to help them locate it?

I'm glad you liked the Morgan letters although Dick's response to my "hypothetical situation" is disturbing. This I do not understand: "But I'll tell you what about this could interest me, if you have time. Erase the sketch you sent me and sketch this in. I can visualize it better that way and it may suggest something to me." Please explain these remarks which incidently are from your 4/21 not concerning John.

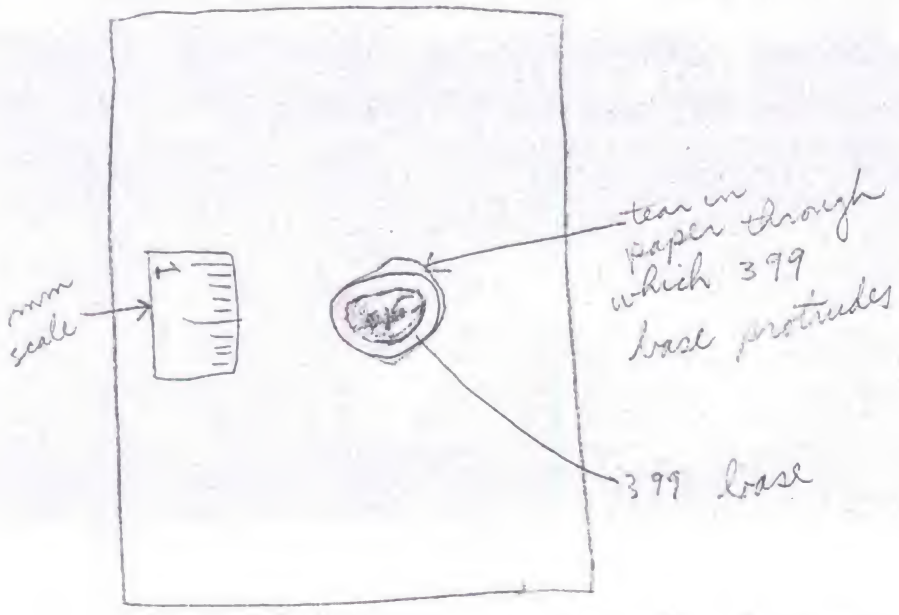
Your 4/17: Someone who had read account in Chicago papers said that Skolnick wants CD 47. Will try to get copy of article.

Thanks for the remarks on the Panthers, etc. As a long-hair (though not a "hippy") I know how low police can get even if they do not break the law. And other people--fascists and fanatics. Sometimes I think they will all drive me out of my skull.

4/18 to me and Dick: What a coincidence. 4/18 was my birthday also. Please sent Lil my best regards and wish her a happy (belated) birthday from me.

This about covers matters for now. I am confident you will understand what I have said herein. And you do seem to know that all of this has been unintentional. I've made every effort to be honest with you. I do not feel at all as if I have condescended by anything I've written in this letter; it is sincere and intended to help, as much as I can, at this late stage.

Best,

Brad

P.S. Here is a rough sketch of what the Nichols base picture looked like.